DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 254 890 CS 504 875

AUTHOR Vangelisti, Anita L.
TITLE A Case Study of Adolescent Girls' Speech Patterns.
PUB DATE Feb 85
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Speech Communication Association (Fresno, CA, February 16-19, 1985). Print is blurred and may not reproduce well.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Behavior Patterns; Case Studies; *Communication Research; *Females; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Interpersonal Communication; Listening; Speech Communication; *Speech Habits

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to describe the speech patterns of four adolescent girls. All four subjects were in the same eighth grade class and knew each other. Approximately 19 hours of observational data and 9 hours of interview data were collected. The descriptive framework of D. Hymes (1972), which focuses specifically on settings, participants, ends, acts, and keys of each situation that was observed, was used as a heuristic tool. Data were collected and analyzed over a period of three months, during which time the following patterns emerged: (1) the transmission of information was initiated by statements or questions that required a verbal response from the listener or a nonverbal ignoring of the speaker; (2) repetition of one's own utterance or the utterance of another was observed as a way to gain response or clarification or to engage in "phatic communion" (P. Farb, 1973); (3) speech was used as a way to reduce uncertainty; 4) verbal interaction usually took place between two or three group members at a time; (5) the relevance of one statement or question to another decreased as the size of the group increased; (6) the kinesics and paralanguage of the girls changed when a male from approximately 13 to 25 years of age was in their presence; and (7) out-group members were considered to be less desirable human beings than were in-group members. These seven patterns all functioned as methods by which to control listener attentiveness. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy

ED254890

A Case Study of Adolescent Girls' Speech Patterns

Anita L. Vangelisti

Department of Speech Communication DL-15

University of Washington

Seattle, WA. 98195

Debut

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Anita L. Vangelisti

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

September 20, 1984

Running Head: Adolescent Girls

CS 504875

Abstract

Adolescence, like other nonlinguistic variables such as social class, is reflected in the speech used by individuals who are going through this particular life stage. Few observation studies have been reported on the speech patterns of adolescence, however, and even fewer have been reported on groups of adolescent females. The present study, thus, has been done in an effort to describe the speech patterns of a group of adolescent girls. The group under study consisted of four eighth grade girls from a suburb of Seattle, Washington. All four subjects attend the same junior high school and each is well acquainted with each of the other group members. Approximately 19 hours of observational data and 9 hours of interview data were collected using Hymes' (1972) descriptive framework as a heuristic tool, focusing specifically on the settings, participants, ends, acts, and key of each situation that was observed. Data were collected and analyzed over a time period of three months, during which the following seven patterns emerged: (a) The transmission of information was initiated by statements or questions that required verbal response or ignoring from the listener(s); (b) repetition of one's own utterance or the utterance of another was observed as a method to gain listener response, gain clarification, or engage in phatic communion (Farb, 1973); (c) speech was used as a way to reduce uncertainty; (d) verbal interaction usually took place between two or three group members at a time; (e) the relevance of one statement or question to another decreases as the size of the group increases; (f) kinesics and paralanguage of the girls change when a male from approximately ages 13 to 25 is in their presence; and (g) out-group members are considered to be less desirable human beings than in-group members are. For the group of adolescent girls, these seven speech patterns all function as methods by which to control listener attentiveness. With the aid of further research, such a control orientation may be demonstrated to extend beyond this group, to a larger population of adolescents, as a way that they attempt to resolve the familiar, adolescent identity crisis (Eriksen, 1968).

A Case Study of Adolescent Girls' Speech Patterns

In discussing "four of the usage scales of native central English" (Joos, 1961, p. 11), Martin Joos notes that "age" is the "frame within which all other scales develop" and is "the most important" (p. 11) of all of all of the scales. Farb (1973) states more specifically that "Children, of course, are less aware than adults of the limitations of the listener" and that "The adult speaker realizes that he is somewhat like a transmitter that broadcasts messages to a listener on a very narrow wavelength, so he tries to send his message in forms of speech that can be received by the listener and decoded without static" (p. 66). The developmental stage between childhood and adulthood, typically labelled as adolescence, may quite reasonably be characterized as a time period during which the individual is learning how to become a more efficient "transmitter" of messages.

Indeed, in defining adolescents as opposed to children and adults, Rogers (1977) says that speech is one of the more salient nonmaterialistic features that distinguishes them from these other two age groups. The qualities that she terms as "inward lookingness" and "psychic attatchment" (p. 164-168), for example, reveal specific speech patterns as important, if not vital parts of adolescence. The exclusivity of communication partners illustrated by "a large fraction of their communications" (p. 165) coming from young people and "their most intimate psychic bonds" (p. 167) being with one another, respectively, encourages the evolution of such distinctive speech.

Another possible reason for the emergence of a different type of talk is Erik Erikson's (1968) well known idea that adolescents are struggling to define their identity in relation to the rest of the world. Keniston (1970) labels this struggle

as "the tension between self and society" (p. 24), and expresses his belief that the adolescent's efforts at self definition do not begin until the late adolescent stage he terms as youth. Whether efforts to define oneself begin in early adolescence, in the stage just preceding adulthood, or during both periods, it seems clear that a feeling of "ambivalence" (Keniston, 1970, p. 24) is present during adolescence. One method by which the adolescent can gain more control over self definition and decrease the ambivalence that seems intrinsic to the adolescent state is to differentiate oneself from other age groups. Using distinctive word, meanings, and speech patterns is one way that the adolescent does this.

Coleman (1979) notes that, in addition to the "particular status ambiguity" (p. 8) of the adolescent, he/she must deal with "major change, both physical and psyhhological" (p. 8). Toffler (1974) and Elkind (1981) take this notion of change experienced by the adolescent one step further, beyond the individual, to the societal level. Toffler discusses the "high-speed change" (p. 20) that characterizes modern society by commenting that "In the past, one assumed that one's elders 'knew' how things were. Yet if the reality is changing, then their knowledge of it is not necessarily trustworthy any longer" (p. 20). Elkind refers to this "dethroning of parents" and other authorities as "cognitive conceit" (p. 107). Elkind, like Toffler, also shows concern for the result that the "change overload" (p. 150) of our modern society may have on the developing individual. On both the individual level and the societal level, such pervasive change and lack of stasis or stability is likely to evoke feelings of insecurity in the adolescent. Due to differential levels of physical and mental development and differential environments, the extent of insecurity felt will surely vavy from one adolescent to another. However, as Pearl (1981) notes, "Security has been a major driving force of civilization" and "remains a preoccupation with humans" (p. 295). In defining this

"driving force" for adolescents, he states that, "Security to adolescents is defined most often in social support terms" (p. 296). One method to form and maintain these social support systems, thus simultaneously forming and maintaining security, is to use different words, meanings, and patterns of speech. Utilizing different speech sets the adolescent apart from children and adults, creating a social support system over which he/she can exert some control.

In short, adolescence, like other nonlinguistic elements such as status, gender, and social class (Farb, 1973, p. 47-59), is reflected in the speech used by individuals who are going through this particular life stage. Few observation studies have been reported on the speech patterns of adolescents, however, and such studies on "groups of female adolescents" are "almost non-existent" (Savin-Williams, 1980, p. 334). The present study, thus, has been done in an effort to describe the speech patterns of a group of adolescent girls. The group under study consisted of four eighth grade girls from a suburb of Seattle, Washington. All four subjects attend the same junior hogh school and each is at least well acquainted, if not "friends" with each of the other group members. Approximately 19 hours of observational data and 9 hours of interview data were collected using Hymes' (1972) descriptive framework as a heuristic tool. Data were collected and analyzed over a time period of three months.

Method

In an effort to maximize access to a variety of speech settings, the researcher chose to observe and interview a group of adolescent girls in which one of the members is her relative, specifically, a younger sister. The subjects were told that they were being observed for a Speech Communication project that the researcher was doing at school. Such an awareness, in addition to the relationship that the researcher had with the subjects may have produced reactivity effects in the subjects

as the subjects could modify their behavior due to the presence of the observer. Also, the expectations of the observer, based on previous experiences with the subjects, could have influenced her interpretations of data collected. These biases, however, do not vary greatly from biases presented by an observer who is a stranger to his/her subjects. Reactivity effects, for example, could be even more prevalent were the observer a stranger, as subjects would be less accustomed to his/her presence. Biased interpretations due to previous experience could also enter into the analysis of an observer who is a stranger, as he/she has most likely had some previous experience with other adolescents or at least a knowledge of their behavior through reviewing the literature written on adolescents. The main source of bias, specific to this relationship with the subjects, thus will stem from the researcher's previous experiences with this group of girls and any preconceptions she may have of their particular speech behaviors. Since the researcher's prior encounters with this group were not devoted to attempting to uncover regularities in their speech patterns, the likelihood that this type of a bias would affect data analysis is minimal compared with the advantages that were presented by the relationship between the researcher and the subjects. Such advantages include the fact that the subjects most probalby behaved more naturally in the presence of the researcher because they had prior occasion with which to interact with one another and this relationship gave the researcher the opportunity to obtain access to communication situations that may have otherwise been closed to her, such as telephone conversations and slumber parties.

As previously stated, the researcher took the role of a relative who needed to observe and interview a group of adolescent girls for a school project. Observations took place during weekly drives and subsequent shopping trips at pet stores, candy stores, or craft stores in one of two nearby shopping centers, for a period of four weeks. Observations were also made at a slumber party, an ice cream parlor, and

during four amplified telephone conversations that allowed the researcher to hear both parties' talk. Field notes were recorded within two hours of the termination of each observation period unless, as in the case of the telephone conversations, the researcher was able to tape record the speech that took place without interfering with the adolescents' normal interactions. In these two isolated cases, transcripts of the conversations were typed one to two days after the observation was made.

Interview data were tape recorded and later transcribed, with the exception of the final interview, which was only partially transcribed due to the repetitive nature of most of the data that it generated. Interviews were conducted in the home of one of the girls, specifically the researcher's younger relative, with two of the four girls present at a time. In order to provide the most comfortable and natural atmosphere possible, the researcher's relative was one of the two girls present at each interview. Since the interviews were conducted at the relatives home, other group members were likely to feel uncomfortable if their companion or "hostess" was not present. Interview data were collected from three of the four girls, as one of the adolescents expressed that she would not care to participate in the interviews by noting that she had "other things" that she "could be doing".

Questions asked during the interviews followed a guideline generated from the patterns noted through analysis of the observation data. The researcher also promoted discussion, in areas other than the six patterns that emerged from the observations, by implementing probing questions that asked for examples, meanings, or further explanation of statements made during the interviews.

Both the interview data and the observation data were analyzed using Hymes' (1972) descriptive framework, focusing specifically on the speech setting, participants, ends, acts, and key of each situation. Observation data were collected and analyzed first. Six distinctive patterns of speech used by the adolescent girls were noted.

Interview data were then collected and similarly analyzed. A seventh pattern emerged from this second analysis. A comparison of the observation data with the interview data was also done as a method by which to validate results obtained and by which to generate additional data.

Results

Observation Data

Six consistent patterns emerged from the observation data. The first of these is the manner in which the subjects initiated the transmission of information regarding themselves or others. When speaking to a member of their group or even to an adult who was present among them, these girls either asked questions or made statements that required a response from those listening. Questions of this nature include, "Guess what?", "Wanna hear the latest gossip?", and "Do you know what happened to me today?" Each of these questions places the listener in the position of either ignoring the speaker or giving her a verbal response that promotes the continuation of her information-giving speech. One other response is possible, but was not observed during this study: verbally disconfirming the initiating statement of the speaker by responding in a negative manner to her question. In addition to these response-provoking questions, statements of a similar nature were made. Examples of such statements include, "You'll never guess what happened today", "I'm so upset", "We need some money though", and "Well, that's not what I hear". Again, such statements call for some type of response from the listener. Most of the appropriate responses to these statements occured in question form: "What?", "Why?", "How much?", or "Well, what did you hear?" are some examples, the first two of which occured most frequently.

The second pattern observed among the group is the tendency to repeat statements made during the course of the conversation. This repetition takes one of two forms: repeating one's own statement or repeating the statement of another person. The former usually occured when the speaker was not being responded to, either verbally

or nonverbally, by her listeners. In this case, the repetition continued until the speaker had obtained an audience. For instance, in the pet store, one of the girls, T, was bobbing her head up and down in front of a large parrot while the parrot imitated her. She said to one of the other girls, "Watch this!" When she noted that the other girl was not paying any attention to her, she repeated her statement, tagging the other girl's name onto the end. The other girl then spoke to her and also began to bob up and down with her. When a speaker had repeated a statement or question three to four times, another response observed was a withdrawal from the group or a retraction of the statement or question on the part of the speaker. An example of this also took place in the pet store. In this instance, one of the girls, S, said to the three other females present, "Look at this magazine you guys!" She repeated her exclamation several times, to no avail, and finally concluded by saying, "O.K., nobody's listening to me anyway."

The second form that repetition was observed to take, repeating the statement of another person, serves a quite different function. Occasionally, one of the girls would repeat another's statement in question form because she did not hear or did not understand it. The fact that there was a lack of comprehension on the part of the listener was expressed through paralanguage, facial expression, and sometimes hand gestures. One instance of this took place during a telephone conversation that was amplified through a telephone receiving device that made it possible for all persons present to hear and speak with the person calling. The person calling in was one of the four girls under study, M. M began to hum and sing into the receiver. The observer asked the other girl, to whom she was humming, "What is she doing?" The other girl said, "I don't know. She's weird." When M heard this, she repeated the statement in question form: "I'm weird?" Obviously, in this case, due to the nature of telephone conversations, paralanguage was the only observable expression of M's desire for further clarification.

This second form of repetition, repeating the statement of another person, did not so often take the form of a request for clarification or a lack of comprehension, like M's question, as it took the form of language play or "phatic communion" (Farb, 1973, p. 25). In such cases, the repetition serves little or no purpose in the conversation other than perhaps to entertain the speaker and/or the listener. In an amplified telephone conversation between M and R, the following dialogue took place:

M: I'm not going to talk.

R: She's not going to talk.

M: I'm not going to talk.

R: (to her mother) Mom, she's not going to talk.

The repetition of "not going to talk" does not seem to serve any particular function until R informs her mother that M is "not going to talk". Nevertheless, the phrase was repeated by both girls. A similar instance occurs in this dialogue:

R: Really.

M: Well, oh woe.

R: Oh woe. (laughs)

M: Woe. (laughs)

R: Woe. (laughs)

M: Woe. (laughs)

R: (laughs)

Another indication that these repetitions serve primarily as entertainment for the speaker and/or the listener is the type of paralanguage used by the adolescents during the interaction. In all cases of this phatic communion, the speaker used an exaggerated, dramatized tone of voice, emphasizing the portion of the utterance being repeated.

The third consistent pattern observed among these girls is the use of speech

to reduce uncertainty. When one of the subjects was unsure about who was listening to her, who was watching her, or who was performing a given action, for example, she asked another, more informed individual for clarification. An instance of this occurred when two of the girls were talking on the telephone. One girl's mother was reading a letter in the background and the girl who could not see that the mother was reading asked, "What? Is she talking about me now?" Another example occurred during the initiation of a phone conversation when one of the girls asked, for no apparent reason, "Is your mom there?" During yet another conversation, one girl asked, "Who's there? Is anybody listening to this?" The effort to reduce uncertainty also occured in situations where one individual could not see or hear something that another individual is responding to. For example, in an ice cream parlor, the group of four girls was sitting in a booth, two on one side and two on the other. While one of the girls was talking, a girl sitting opposite her began to look over her shoulder. The girl who was speaking stopped her flow of speech to ask, "Who's there? Who are you looking at?" While in some adult circles such interruptions would be inappropriate and would disturb the flow of speech from one person to another, these girls responded to such queried as if they were a routine happening in their conversations. Questions are simply answered and the conversation is resumed either under the same topic or under a new topic and if there is a change in the topic, the original speaker rarely shows signs of displeasure or irritation.

The fourth pattern occuring regularly throughout the observations is that talk between these adolescent girls usually happens in dyads despite the number of persons present. One of the more typical examples of this occured during the amplified telephone conversations. Despite the fact that as many as five people have been present during these conversations, talk usually occured only between two persons at a time and if others were integrated into the conversation, they were involved indirectly, through one of the two speakers. For example, in one conversation,

M asked R whether another man and woman present were married rather than asking the couple themselves. Occasionally, other individuals were involved in the conversation, however, when this was done, one of the two adolescents originally speaking would remain silent. A more obvious instance of this tendency toward dyadic communication took place in the ice cream parlor. The observer and the four girls were seated at a booth, three on one side and two on the other, facing one another. Most of the time, conversations were carried on between the adolescents in two dyads rather than among the group as a whole. This became especially noticeable when individuals sitting both across the table from one another and diagonally to one another formed conversing dyads. One may hypothesize that the reason for the occurence of this dyadic communication pattern is due to the even number of participants involved in each of the previously mentioned groups. However, the group was also observed when an odd number of girls, three, were present and a similar pattern emerged. Admittedly, in the odd-numbered groups, a third party was more often observed to interject statements and/or questions, but such an interjection was rare in comparison to the number of instances that one did not occur. For example, on the way to a shopping trip, in a car, a conversation consisting of approximately sixteen back and forth verbal exchanges took place. Three of the girls were present. Of the sixteen lines in this conversation, fourteen were spoken by a dyad. Two of the girls would speak, then when a third began to contribute, one of the first two would remain silent and the newly formed dyad would speak.

The fifth speech pattern that occurs regularly among these females is a decreasing relevance of one statement or question to the statement or question following it as the size of the group increases. This distinction can be especially noted if one contrasts the type of dialogue that took place when the researcher took the group of four girls on a shopping trip and when she took only two of the same girls on a similar shopping trip. During the former trip, conversation could be described as at

least disjointed if compared with the latter. Typically, two girls would be conversing, but would exchange no more than three to five lines before a third party would interject an utterance that had little or nothing to do with the topic in discussion. At this point, the initiator of the first topic would usually withdraw from the conversation and the newly formed dyad would continue to converse. The transition from one dyad to another was usually quite smooth, however, occasionaly, the girl who was to withdraw from the conversation would demonstrate some type of frustration with a sigh, rolling of the eyes, or a remark concerning the unimportance of her message or the lack of listening on the part of her partners. During the shopping trip with only two of the females present, conversation would take place over a much more extended period of time, with three to four times as many exchanges concerning the same topic.

A second example of the differentiation between the relevance of one statement to another in a group of more than three as compared with smaller groups is illustrated by the amplified telephone conversations. When both of the girls were aware that the conversation was being amplified and more than just the two females were participating, the conversation was disjointed relative to instances in which only one of the females was aware of the amplification and there were no other participants. For instance, two of the girls and one of their mothers were conversing over the telephone about one of the girls, who was trying to see how long she could go without talking. Two other persons were present, but were not participating in the conversation. Both of the adolescents were aware of the presence of all other persons and both were aware that the conversation was being amplified. M, one of the adolescents, said that she wanted to "start over". R, the other girl, repeated M's statement: "No, she wants to start over." R's mother mumbled something (inaudible) while M proceeded to ask R if she realized "how complicated stocks are". R responded by asking M if her mother ever said "balls". Four verbal exchanges followed between the females and then M

began to converse with one of the other persons present.

The sixth regular pattern observed is a change in kinesics and paralanguage that occurs whenever a member of the opposite sex is present. In order for this change to occur, the boy or man must range in age from approximately 13 years of age to 25 years of age. He may be either alone or in a group of other males. These criteria seem to be sufficient to evoke increased body movements, voice volume, and speed of speech from the girls.

Interview Data

Interviews of the girls were conducted for two purposes: to confirm observations and to generate new data concerning the speech patterns of this group of adolescents. The first patten that emerged from the observation data, that the group initiates the transmission of information in statements or questions that require either a verbal response or a nonverbal ignoring of the speaker on the part of the listener, was confirmed by the interview data. The interviews suggest not only that this pattern occurs, but that the acceptable response is to inquire about what the speaker is thinking. For example, when asked how they would initiate a conversation with a friend after "something really neat happened" to them, one of the girls responded, "We'd probably go, 'Oh, guess what happened today.'" The other girl quickly added, "You have to sound excited about it." Illustrating the proper response to this initiation, the first girl noted, "And then they'd probably go, 'Oh, what?' And then you'd say, 'Da da da...' what happened."

A violation of this pattern on the part of the listener in the form of disconfirmation or ignoring the speaker seems to be more the responsibility of the individual being violated than it is the responsibility of the violator. The following exchange illustrates this attribution of responsibility to the initiator:

R: I think, I think why people say that is just because, like if someone

says, "Guess who I met today", it kind of arouses your curiosity. Guess. "Hmmm, I don't know, who?" But if you just say, "I met someone today"...."Oh."

T: Yeah.

Interviewer: Would they really go "Oh"?

R: A lot of people would. A lot of people are really...

T: They just kind of wait for you to say something next.

R: Or they might just kind of go, "Oh" and start looking around. You lose their concentration (inaudible word).

Interviewer: So...

R: (interrupting to finish) ...attention.

Violations may symbolize, for the adolescent girl, not only a disconfirmation of her experience (what you have to say is not important), but also a lack of ability to maintain the attention of her listeners (you are an incompetent speaker).

The second pattern, that the girls tend to repeat statements or questions in an effort to gain a response from another, to gain clarification, or to entertain themselves and/or their listeners through language play or phatic communion, was also confirmed, though slightly modified, through the interviews. When discussing a friend who often "tunes herself out", R noted that "I end up yelling at her and finally she'll go, 'What?' And then you start all over again. You just kind of say their name and..." T interrupted, noting, "Then you repeat what you were saying." Another possible response to such inattentiveness that was not observed, but was quite prevalent in the interview data was the use of the word "Hello". When asked what she says when someone doesn't hear her, M responded, "Hello?" R also noted that "You just kind of go, 'Hello?'" The word "Hello" seems to play a role similar to that of the initiating questions and statements used in the first pattern. It

almost necessitates a response of some type from the listener.

Repetition as a form of entertainment was both discussed and observed as it occured spontaneously during the interview. For instance, when asked about this, the following set of utterances occured:

T: We do that all the time.

R: We're weird.

Interviewer: What kinds of words does it have to be for you to do that type of thing?

T: Awesome, man, that's awesome.

R: Awesome...awesome.

T: Awesome.

(both girls laugh)

Despite M's vehement, "I don't copy people!", in a later interview, she not only eventually complied by noting, "Well, I, if they say it really weird...", but also participates with R in such imitation of the interviewer when her voice "cracks" during a question. M's statement that she would perform this type of repetition if "they said it really weird" and her actual performance of this repetition serve as evidence to support its existence for this group of girls.

The third pattern was similarly supported by the interview discussions and by its performance. This pattern asserts that the group often uses speech to reduce uncertainty of others in their environment who may be watching, listening, or performing some other action that could distract their listener's attention. In reference to a phone conversation with her friend, K, M says, "I would ask if I thought it was somebody. Like one time K had F over and I thought it was, she wouldn't tell me, but I knew it was her." During a different interview, M telephoned R while R and T were being interviewed. Apparently hearing some voices in the background of their telephone

conversation, M asked R who was at R's house. T attributed this type of questioning to being "really jealous". T gave an example of such jealousy in herself as occuring when her friend B, "in Alaska" would invite a new friend over to spend the night at her house. She says, "Just anger, you know, just, I'd get, I'd get jealous." R added to T's characterization of this questioning by labeling the person who did the questioning as feeling "insecure".

The fourth pattern, that talk between these girls most often occurs in dyads, despite the size of the group, was slightly modified by the interviewing data. For instance, when asked if they were all able to talk together at once when in a group of five or six, typical responses were, "Uh uh", "In groups of two or three or four maybe. I've never...", and "It's super hard". Although the girls did indeed specify difficulty in talking in groups of five or six, they did not perceive the desired number of a speaking group to be necessarily limited to two. As noted in the interviews, one determinant of the number of persons participating in a conversation is the topic under discussion. The girls stated that participants need to be "interested in what we were talking about" and "It depends, yeah, it depends on the subject." A second determinant of the number of persons paritcipating in a conversation was the social setting. M noted a definite destinction between the number of participants in a conversation at the "400" building and at the lunch table. She said, "Like, one person talks and everybody listens." "They just, that's how it goes. But at the lunch table it's different." She also affirms that at the lunch table, conversations are usually held between "two people".

The fifth pattern observed, that the relevance of one statement or question to another decreases as the size of the group increases, was directly confirmed through the interview data. When asked if they were more likely to say something that had little or nothing to do with the topic at hand in a big group or a small group, all of the females interviewed responded that they were more likely to do so in a big

group. Three reasons were cited for the use of less relevant statements or questions. The first, stated most explicitely by T, was that "you want somebody to listen to you so you say something dumb." The theme of not being listened to is consistent with the first pattern discussed in this study, that the girls noted a necessity to use opening phrases such as "Guess what" to gain the attention of their listeners. The second reason given was "competition". One of the girls noted that "You want to say something more interesting than what they've just said." Another said, "You worry about whether you're going to sound interesting or not." The third reason stated as contributing to the lack of relevance in the conversation of larger groups is the embarassment that can result from a violation of selecting the appropriate topic to discuss. Given the repeated statement made by the adolescents that certain topics are appropriate for certain listners, the attention of an inattentive audience can quickly be obtained by discussing an inappropriate topic. In reference to this, T states, "O.K., say for example, friend, mom. You could talk to your mom easier about sex or something like that..." R finishes by saying, "Than you friend because your friend would probably get embarrassed." This method of embarrassing a listener, whether it be an adult or a peer, has been observed repeatedly as a way to gain attention.

The sixth pattern, noted in both the observations and the interview data is that the kinesics and paralanguage of the girls change when two or more males, from ages 13 to 25 are in their presence. When asked how they typically react when "guys" are around, the following types of statements were made:

M: Turn around or wave or make a face or...I don't know.

R: You yowl too. You go, "Whoop!"

T: Yeah. Or you might just kind of look as he goes by and just kind of...

R: Smile.

These changes in the girls' kinesics and paralanguage seem to depend on two factors:

the "mood" and the location. If the mood of the girls present is "wild" or "goofy", their reactions to males will be more pronounced than if the mood was more serious. In order for the mood to become either "wild" or "goofy", there must be at least two girls present. The adolescent apparently cannot achieve this state of mind without the help of her peer(s). The location is conducive to these changes in nonverbal communication if it is lacking an authority figure who could or would react negatively toward the changes and if it is a relatively familiar setting for the girls. In the case that neither of these two factors are present and the adolescent finds herself in the presence of a male, her reaction will tend to be markedly more subtle.

The final pattern, generated through the interview data, subsumes several of the patterns previously mentioned. This pattern consists of the overriding opinion that out-group members are less desirable human beings than in-group members are. One of the many examples of this pattern occured when the researcher asked the girls if many individuals verbally "gang-up" on other individuals. R began her response by saying that "a lot of times they will", but is quick to insert that "usually when it's us, we'll just be kidding." In this case, the proverbial "us" refers to R and her group of friends. Just prior to this statement, however, R had said with pride, "When we're all together, then we pick on each other really bad. If...you just don't want do do anything to embarrass you." She goes on to suggest, "Otherwise, we'll just never let you forget it for the rest of your life." Although R and her friends may indeed be "just kidding", it seems possible that those of us who will "never" "forget it" may have a different perception of this type of joking. In fact, even T notes that "Usually you just say, 'I'm just kidding'", but that "if they're in a bad mood, they'll just say, 'sure' and give me a dirty look." Here, T and the "they" that she was "kidding" had different perceptions of her joking statement. From T's point of view, the "dirty look" that she received was not due

to her own poor choice of words, but to the other person's "bad mood".

Implications

This study has been undertaken in an effort to describe the speech patterns of a group of adolescent girls. Observation and interview data collected over a time period of three months generated a total of seven speech patterns. The final pattern, primarily an outgrowth of the interview data, serves as a useful synthesis of the study as a whole. These girls view others, specifically out-group members, as an inattentive audience, whose attention must be earned in one manner or another. Conversely, the girls view themselves as an attentive, more sensitive audience, despite the fact that they may often engage in the same types of activities that out-group members do. Considering all seven of the patterns, each in context with the other six, this element of gaining control over listener attentiveness as an appropriate, if not a necessary behavior, is quite prevalent. As a result, when a female adolescent from this group finds herself in a situation in which she has what she would define as an inattentive audience, she will use verbal and/or nonverbal means by which to attract and control the attention of that audience and to diminish distractions.

By the term "audience", the author is referring to any person or group of persons toward which the speaker wishes to direct a message. In sending her message, the adolescent is either assuming that her listener will be interested once she accomplishes the task of obtaining his/her attention or she is taking the risk that he/she may not be interested in what she has to say. In either case, a lack of attentiveness after the girl has made her attempt to gain her listener's attention represents a type of rejection for the speaker: either a reflection of her knowledge of which topics are interesting for the listener or a rejection of her own personal interest in the topic

she is introducing. The speaker, therefore, most often takes the responsibility of being "embarrassed" rather than allowing it to be placed upon the listener. For instance, if one of the girls were to say, "Guess what" and her listener were to respond by ignoring her statement, the girl would be "embarrassed". T termed the feeling resulting from being ignored or disconfirmed as wanting "to shrink". R added, "you want to crawl under the seat." As these adolescents view it, listener inattentiveness is usually due to a lack of ability to control the "concentration" of the listener on the part of the speaker. As R stated, "you have to sound excited about it."

Repetition, whether done in an effort to gain a response from another, to gain clarification, or for entertainment, in the form of phatic communion, also includes the importance of the adolescents' ability to attain and control the attention of their audience. When repetition is not successful in obtaining audience attention, these adolescents were observed to withdraw temporarily from interaction and make derogatory remarks concerning their own statements or actions.

Using verbal means to reduce uncertainty of others in their environment who may be watching, listening, or performing some other action that could distract their listener's attention illustrates yet another means by which these girls attempt to control the attention of their audience. By reducing uncertainty and discovering possible sources of distraction for their listener(s), the girls have a better chance to eliminate or at least deal with such distractions, thus increasing the possibility of maximizing listener attentiveness.

The tendency to converse in small groups of less than five persons similarly increases the adolescents' chance to gain the attention of their listeners in that the speaker has less people's attention to obtain. The report that talk outside the "400" building takes place among a large number of people is not inconsistent with

this generalization due to the distinctive nature of this talk. In the setting outside the "400", other qualities, such as "being cool", are more important to the adolescent girls than gaining the attention of the audience. Thus, attention gaining methods, such as speaking in smaller groups, are not implemented.

The fifth pattern, that the relevance of one question or statement to the question or statement following it decreases as the size of the group increases, becomes quite understandable as another means by which this group of girls gains the attention of their listeners when one notes the reasons that the girls gave for the diminishing relevance. In larger groups, wanting others to listen "so you say something dumb", "competition", "worry" "about whether you're going to sound interesting or not", and saying something that "your friend would probably get embarrassed" about all serve as methods to obtain audience attentiveness.

A change in both kinesics and paralanguage in the presence of a member of the opposite sex who is approximately 13 to 25 years of age is a similar effort to gain the attention of a possibly inattentive audience. If indeed the girls were not concerned with gaining the attention of this select group of boys and men, it seems unlikely that they would make the effort to change their nonverbal cues when in their presence.

Finally, the seventh pattern, that the group of adolescents under study are of the opinion that in-group members are more desireable human beings than out-group members are, also is consistent with the generalization made by the author. That is to say, when discussing persons that are inattentive, "always talking" or "spacing out", these persons are most often not members of the girls' group. Also if a group member is observed to be inattentive, her behavior is either ignored or is excused.

Clearly, for these adolescent girls, the seven speech patterns discussed all function as methods by which to control listener attentiveness. In an effort to define their identities in relation to the rest of their world (Erikson, 1968) and

to relieve the "tension between self and society" (Keniston, 1970, p. 24), the ability to control their environment, whether it includes one or many listeners, may be a very important step for the adolescent. Being able to obtain and maintain the attention of an audience implies that the adolescent is both interesting and socially competent as an individual and as a member of her society. Similarly, the "particular status ambiguity" (Coleman, 1979, p.8) that the adolescent contends with is rendered less ambiguous when she is able to define herself as a verbally competent person. Not only does that definition provide her with some type of determiner of her present status, but it also provides her with a vague idea of her future status. As stated by Conger (1977), "the adolescent who is attempting to adjust to a changing self (psychologically and physically) and to meet rapidly changing societal demands may often experience doubts, anxieties, and, not infrequently, strong resentments" (p. 338). These negative feelings can at least be minimized if the adolescent is able to define herself as an interesting and socially competent individual due to her ability to control listener attentiveness.

Salmon (1979) notes three main functions of the peer group. The first is intimacy and the second is validation by consensus, which serve to aid the adolescent in defining himself/herself as an individual and aid him/her in "attempts at establishing a viable social identity" (p. 111), respectively. The third is "the offering of a frame of reference" (p. 112), which provides the adolescent with a standard by which to compare himself/herself. All three of these functions reduce the adolescent's uncertainty or "ambivalence" (Keniston, 1970, p. 24) concerning her definition of self and her societal role, thereby reducing the doubts, anxieties, and resentments discussed by Conger (1977). This study suggests that it is not only the presence or existence of a peer group that specifies such definitions, but that it is also the patterns of speech that they use and their ability to reduce the adolescent's uncertainty of her self definition. Farb (1973) illustrates this

generalization, exemplifying the second pattern discussed in this study, the use of repetition as a form of entertainment or phatic communion. He notes that:

> Such empty phrases do not inform, and they certainly do not offer listeners any new thoughts. In these cases, the speakers, of course, are using words not for communication, but for maneuvering in various social situations. Such utterances identify relationships, express the speaker's role in society, and probe other people's personalities by forcing them into a situation where they must reply (p. 24).

The results of this study indicate that all seven of the patterns discussed, provide the adolescent with such definitions, by enabling her to control listener attentiveness. By obtaining the attention of her audience, the speaker may define herself as interesting or competent. In relation to society, she may note that she is a person who can function adequately and appropriately and that she has valuable contributions to make. If, on the other hand, the adolescent is continually disconfirmed by her listeners, she may define herself as uninteresting and incompetent. Either way, the control oriented patterns that emerged from this study give the subjects a method by which to, at least in part, define themselves, and thus obtain a sense of security as opposed to a sense of ambiguity.

More generally, the results show that adolescence, or the "teenage" (Joos, 1961, p. 11) condition is one nonlinguistic factor that affects speech. Describing the speech patterns utilized by this group of adolescent girls has revealed "relations between" their "linguistic means and social meaning" (Hymes, 1972, p. 39). The control orientation present in each pattern noted serves the girls as a tool to aid them in dealing with identity conflicts that emerge as a result of the social meaning of adolescence.

Due to the larger samples studied in the references that support these generalizations, these results are likely to be generalizable to the larger population

of adolescent girls and women. Indeed judging from this author's more informal experience with other adolescents, such a move seems reasonable. In other words, the social meaning of the adolescent condition is likely to extend beyond this group of girls to a larger adolescent population. Additional research implementing the same methods of data collection that the present study has, but using a larger sample of subjects would serve as an aid in validating this interpretation. Also, studying the speech patterns that occur within groups, between group members, as opposed to those that occur between members of one group and members of another would be indicative of the validity of such a generalization by specifying whether patterns observed only occur within groups, rather than across groups, whether the subjects' view of out-group members as being "inferior" affects their communication patterns, and whether similar groups display the patterns generated in this study with similar frequencies. Comparative studies with other subjects such as children, adults, or adolescent boys and/or men would also help answer questions concerning the specificity or nonspecificity of these patterns and generalizations about adolescent girls' talk. As stated by Savin-Williams, "natural observation studies" on "groups of female adolescents" are "almost non-existent" (p. 344). Thus, in studying adolescent girls' and womens' speech patterns and their orientation toward controlling listener attentiveness and gaining security and self definition, the researcher has a variety of potential approaches from which to choose. It is the hope of this author that the present study has not only generated new knowledge about adolescent girls, but also has increased interest in studying these individuals as a method by which to enhance our understanding of them.

References

Coleman, J.C. (1979). Current views of the adolescent process. In J.C. Coleman (Ed.), The school years: Current issues in the socialization of young people (pp. 1-23). Cambridge: University Press.

Conger, J.J. (1977). Adolescence and youth: Psychological development in a changing world. New York: Harper & Row.

Eriksen, E.H. (1968). Identity: Youth and crisis. London: Faber and Faber.

Farb, P. (1973). Word play: What happens when people talk. New York: Bantam Books.

Hymes, D. (1972). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (Eds.), Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication (pp. 39-71). New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Joos, M. (1961). The five clocks. New York: Hancourt, Brace & World.

Keniston, K. (1970). Youth: A "new" stage of life. American Scholar, 39, pp. 631-654.

Pearl, A. (1981). A phenomenological cost-benefit analysis approach to adolescence. In R.W. Henderson (Ed.), Parent child interaction: Theory, research and prospects (pp. 293-323). New York: Academic Press.

Rogers, D. (1977). Issues in adolescent psychology (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Salmon, P. (1979). The role of the peer group. In J.C. Coleman (Ed.), The school years: Current issues in the socialization of young people (pp. 95-121). Cambridge: University Press.

Savin-Williams, R.C. (1980). Social interactions of adolescent females in natural groups. In H.C. Foot, A.J. Chapman, & J.R. Smith (Eds.), Friendship and social relations in children (pp. 343-364). New York: John Wiley & Sons.